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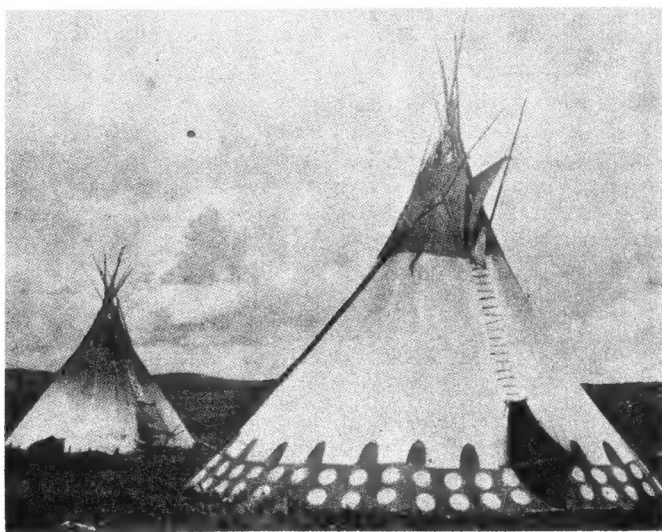
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NUMBER 6

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## PAINTED TIPIS AND PICTURE- WRITING OF THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS

By WALTER McCLINTOCK



SNOW TIPI OF CHIEF MAD WOLF

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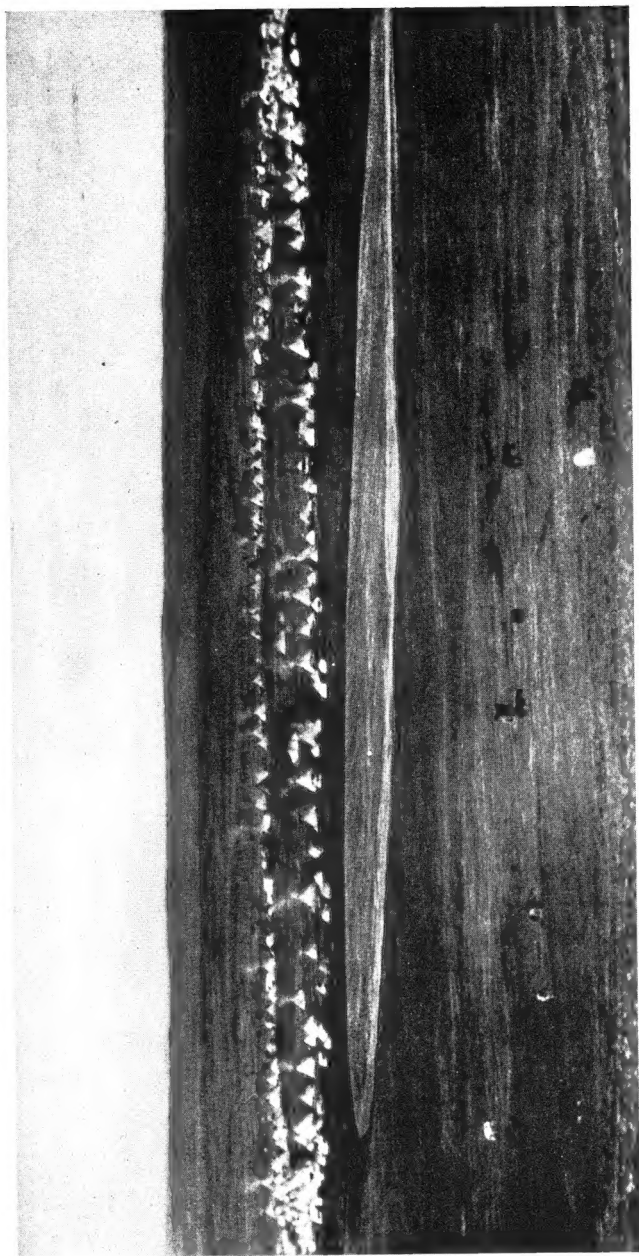


FIG. 1—Great Circle Camp of the Blackfoot in 1896

## PAINTED TIPIS AND PICTURE-WRITING OF THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS

By WALTER MCCLINTOCK

**I**N former years, when the old generation of Blackfoot were still alive, it was their custom to have a circle camp (fig. 1) every summer to celebrate their Sun Dance.

I remember the big camp of 1896, when I entered for the first time with Siksikaikoan, my Indian guide.<sup>1</sup> We crossed the northern Rockies with pack-horses and came upon the tribal camp of his people on the prairies near the foot of the mountains. He took me to the lodges of the head-men, and thus I met White Calf, their venerable head-chief for thirty years; Siyeh (Mad Wolf) and Running Crane; the war-chiefs, Little Plume and Little Dog; and the medicine-men, Spotted Eagle, Bull Child, and White Grass. That was forty years ago, but the scenes of the camp and the natural beauty of the hills surrounding the prairies covered with luxuriant bunch-grass, verdant from the rains of early summer, are still fresh in my mind.

The camp had hundreds of smoke-colored tipis and was more than a mile in circumference. It was situated on a broad flat near Willow Creek, Montana, a trout stream of clear cold water that rose in the nearby foothills, bordered by marshy meadows and thickets of alder and willows; and along the western horizon, the snow-capped summits of the Frontier Range of the Rockies.

Herds of horses fed contentedly on the grass-covered hills, and in moist lowlands were meadows of bright-colored wild flowers. On the inside of the camp, where the best families lived, were the large painted tipis of the chiefs, and in the center of the circle a wide open space where social dances, sham battles, and the ceremonies of the Sun Dance took place.

I shall never forget my first sight of the painted tipis on the inner circle, with their clusters of tapering poles, figures of birds and wild animals, their symbolic pictures of sacred objects, and the stars and constellations of the night skies. The smoky smell and flavor of everything; packs of barking dogs and herds of horses; the crowds of Indians in bright-colored clothes; their dances and songs and ceremonies with beating of drums.

<sup>1</sup> The famous Blackfoot scout for Generals Custer, Miles, and Reno. He was with Reno's command in the Custer battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

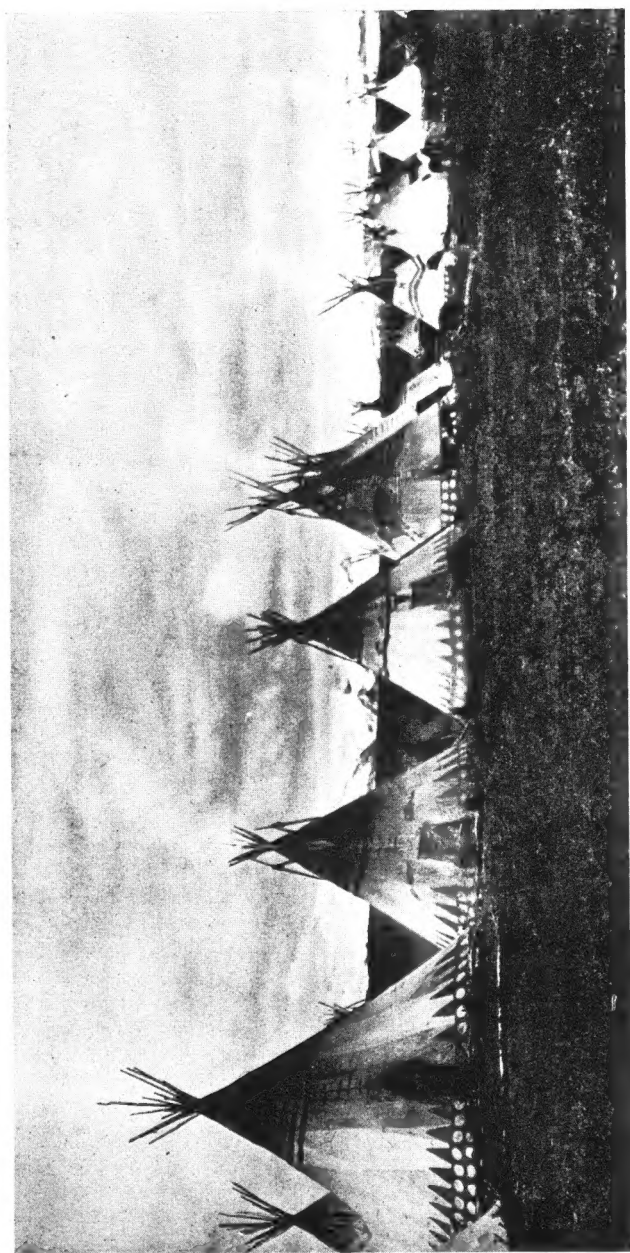


FIG. 2—Inner circle of Painted tipis in 1908

There was another large camp in the summer of 1908, on a broad stretch of prairie and the shore of a lake, outside the foothills and about twenty miles from the main range of the Rockies (fig. 2). That year the camp had 350 lodges—thirty of them painted tipis. These belonged mostly to the headmen of the different bands and were pitched in prominent places of the inner circle. Their owners and the families which lived in them were proud of them; their rituals and the supernatural power that went with them gave a sort of social prestige and good standing in the tribe.

A decorated tipi was in itself an announcement that within rested a sacred bundle whose owner possessed the ritual associated with it. Both men and women made vows to these tipis in time of danger and in behalf of the sick. The design and ritual of the decorated tipis, and all that went with them, came originally through dreams and belonged exclusively to their founders, who might transfer to others, but no one could copy them. Only among the Blackfoot was there a definite association by which the decoration of the tipi became an integral part of the ritual. But the esthetic value of the decorations was secondary.

In these pictures and decorations we have a fine series of examples of Blackfoot religious art—in fact, almost the entire range of such art. The specific symbols were usually of three classes—the mythical originator and his wife, their home, and their trails. They were depicted in pairs, male and female: for large animals, a single pair; for small ones, four or more. In most cases the animal figures were highly realistic and usually were painted in black. Their vital organs and life-line were represented in color—red, yellow, green.

Most of the painted tipis had a darkened area at the top to represent the night sky, with white discs for constellations (the Great Bear and the Pleiades), a similar border at the bottom with one or two rows of star-signs (fallen stars),<sup>1</sup> and a row of projections for hills or mountains. In the rear and at the top was a cross, said by some to represent a moth, or the sleep-bringer, by others the morning star.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Puff-balls which grew in circles on the prairies were called "fallen stars" by the Blackfoot.

<sup>2</sup> According to a Blackfoot legend, Mistake Morning Star was the son of Morning Star. They were said to be "traveling together in the sky" when two planets were in conjunction. Then he was often mistaken for his father, Morning Star, because he appeared first above the horizon, while his father rose soon after. This beautiful star legend was related to the author by the famous medicine-man Brings-Down-The-Sun, of the Northern Piegan, in July, 1905, when an unusual conjunction of the planets Venus and Jupiter took place before daybreak.

Sacred objects were commonly represented by certain conventional symbols: red, yellow, and blue bands for red cloud, yellow cloud, and the blue sky; black for night. Male animals were mostly on the south side, female on the north. The

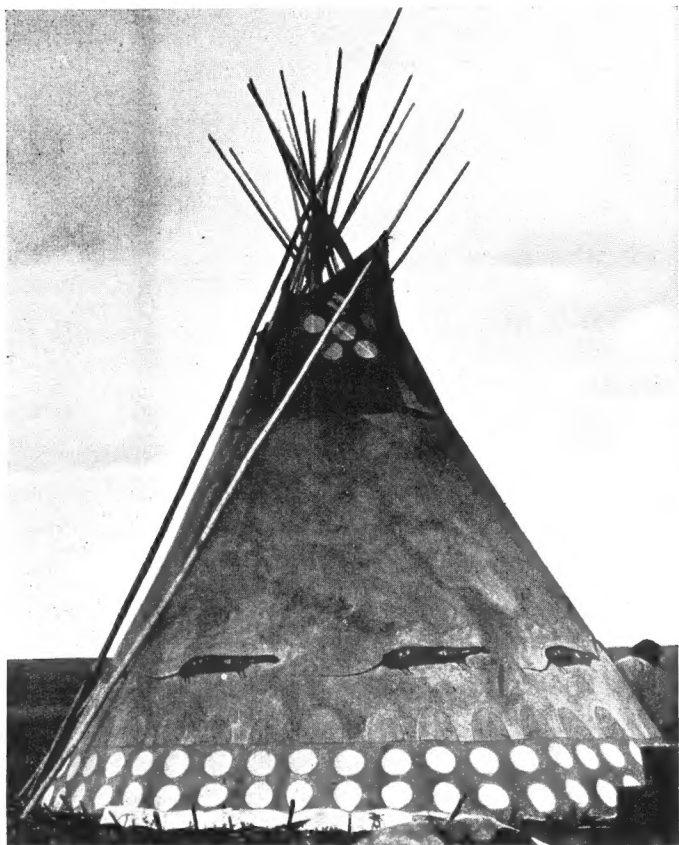


FIG. 3—An Otter tipi

thunderbird stood for lightning; colored bands for the rainbow, symbolic of a clearing storm. Of all the animals, the buffalo was believed to have the greatest power, but that of the deer and elk was also great. The eagle and raven were especially strong helpers, and the underwater animals also were



powerful. But of all the animals, the most sacred was the beaver, to which the otter was supposed to be related. The mink was another powerful aquatic animal, and the weasel was related to it.

I stayed for a week in an Otter tipi (fig. 3) with Marrow-bones, its owner. I saw him in his care of it and gathered information. This tipi had the conventional black top for a night sky, with a yellow cross for the morning star. Four male and four female otters were in a procession round the center; above them were red circles for the ripples made by an otter swimming, and at the bottom was a band with triangular projections representing mountains. The supernatural power that went with the tipi came to the founder in a dream when he visited the home of an otter. Marrow-bones had a large otter-skin which he sometimes took from his sacred bundle and hung from a pole at the top of the tipi. There were also other animal and bird skins and a drum. In good weather Marrow-bones hung his medicine-case from a tripod outside the tipi, but always brought it inside at night or during a storm.

When Marrow-bones gave the ritual, he opened his sacred bundle and took out the contents. He sang songs over them and prayed. He painted his body with yellow and red to represent the shore of a lake where the otter lived and his trails and tracks in the soft earth. On his forehead a circle stood for the home of the otter, another on his breast for a hole in the river-bank through which the otter passed. Some of the Otter tipi tabus were: Never pound on bones or drum in the night. Never break a buffalo-head inside the tipi, nor throw any part of the head into the fire. Never blow on the fire without using a pipe-stem. Never lean an old tipi-pole against the tipi.

Near this Otter tipi of Marrow-bones was the Black Buffalo tipi (fig. 4), with a bull painted across the front on the east side and a cow across the back. The tongue of each animal was represented as protruding, and each was licking the rump of the other. In both the bull and the cow the life-line was alternately red and green. The animals themselves were painted black on a white ground. A black border at the bottom symbolized fallen stars; a green cross at the top represented the moth or sleep-bringer. The points of the tipi wings had buffalo-tails and hoofs attached, and clusters of discs for constellations.

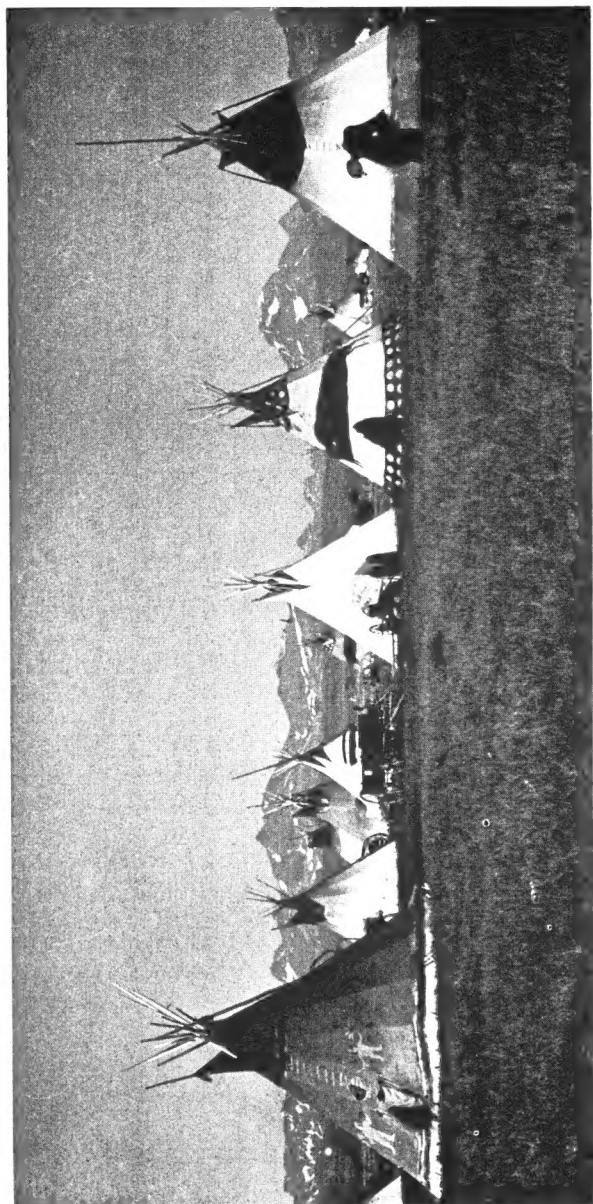


FIG. 4—Painted Tipis in the Inner Circle

(1, Red tipi from the Atsina or Gros Ventres of the Plains. 2, Black Buffalo tipi. 3, Bald-headed Eagle tipi of Big Moon)

The Yellow Buffalo tipi (fig. 5) was similar to the Black Buffalo. These were two of the most important lodges in the circle-camp. The concept of both came from the Under-water people and was handed down to their founders at the same time. They also had the same rituals. The owners of these Buffalo tipis were the men who sang and brought the



FIG. 5—Yellow Buffalo tipi

buffalo near, and were associated in part with the rituals to call the buffalo. According to the origin myths pertaining to the tipis, their founders were two young men who sat together on a river-bank, looking into the water. One of them, seeing the tops of poles of a tipi, went down to investigate and saw the Black Buffalo tipi. He entered the tipi and

found it dry inside; through holes in it, he could see the water flowing by. A man and a woman were there. The man said: "My son, I have asked you to come here that I might give you my tipi. When you return to the shore, ask your companion to come here. Another man invites him and will give him the Yellow Buffalo tipi." When the young men



FIG. 6—Crow tipi

Elk Horn as herald making an announcement. Old woman with travois and water kettles just arrived from the river. Son-in-law (in distance at right) standing aloof because of the presence of his mother-in-law.

returned to the camp, they founded the two Buffalo tipis. Both had tabus against allowing dogs inside; the fire must not be allowed to die out; the door must not stand open, nor should anyone strike the outside of the tipi.

The Crow tipi (fig. 6) had two buffalo heads, one in front over the door, the other at the back. Around the center was a broad band in red, above which a procession of crows carried food in their bills. This tipi was founded by a man who was catching eagles in the mountains. Many crows roosted in the trees near where he slept. One night a crow appeared in a dream and gave him the Crow tipi with its decoration

and its ritual. This happened in the mountains of Alberta, near the source of a river which the Blackfoot called from that time "Etawats" (Crow Lodge), but is now commonly called Old Man's River.

There was also the Raven tipi of Lone Chief. Around its center was a fringe of deerskin upon which stood a line of ravens, five on each side, walking toward the front. Each raven held a piece of red flannel to represent flesh. The top was black for a night sky, with constellations on the tipi wings—the Great Bear on the north side and the Pleiades on the south. At the back were a blue cross for the moth or sleep-bringer, and five horse-tails below it. Under the black top for the night sky were three bands, two red and one yellow to represent the color of clouds at sunrise. A red band at the bottom had a single row of fallen stars and triangular projections for mountain peaks.

The Big Stripe tipi was also called the Single Circle tipi, after the man who founded it, and also sometimes Beaver tipi, because Single Circle, its founder, was the owner of a Beaver bundle which had its origin from the beavers.<sup>1</sup> In a dream the beaver and otter both gave him the tipi. Around its center was a broad red band on which were six black otters, all running from back to front to enter their den, the males on the south side, the females on the north. Their teeth showed white and their mouths red, while the life-line was red and green. The den of the otters was represented by a colored area over the door and extending almost to the smoke-hole. At the back, and high up, was a green moon with yellow border, and with a horse-tail tide to its center. Inside, just over the door, was a rattle made of buffalo-calf hoofs with the tail hanging down. This served to announce anyone arriving or leaving, as his head would touch the tail and rattle the hoofs. A ceremony and feast were given at the end of winter or in early spring, when ice was breaking up in the rivers and beavers were accustomed to leave their winter dens.

There was a Blue tipi, or home of the Thunder, which belonged to No Coat, a son of the famous chief Running Crane. This was known as a fair-weather lodge. The ritual was given as a protection from storms and had power to clear the sky; also it was given when the first thunder was heard in the spring.

<sup>1</sup> See "The Blackfoot Beaver Bundle" in *The Masterkey* for May and July, 1935, reprinted as *Leaflets* Nos. 2 and 3.

The body of this lodge was blue all over, darkest near the top and pale-blue near the ground. At the back was a large yellow disc, the north half dotted with small blue spots to represent hail, and the south half yellow for rain. On top of the disc the thunderbird was sketched in blue, with outstretched wings, and flashes of lightning from its beak. A drum with similar pictures was used in the ritual. It was



FIG. 7—Thunder tipi of Wolf Plume

tabu for anyone, either afoot or on horseback, to pass between the tripod where the drum hung and the back of the tipi; and no noise must be made near by.

There were a number of Thunder tipis in the camp. That of Wolf Plume (fig. 7) had a black top for the night sky with constellations, and a cross at the back for the moth or sleep-bringer. Under the top were four red bands for trails of the thunder; at the base were rows of discs for fallen stars, and triangular projections for mountains.

The Buffalo Rock tipi (fig. 8) was known as Red Head's tipi. It had a red band at the base, with conventional mountains resting upon it. Both at the back and in front were large red figures, rounded above and resting upon the band below, to represent masses of rock (glacier boulders) often found on the prairies, against which the buffalo were accus-

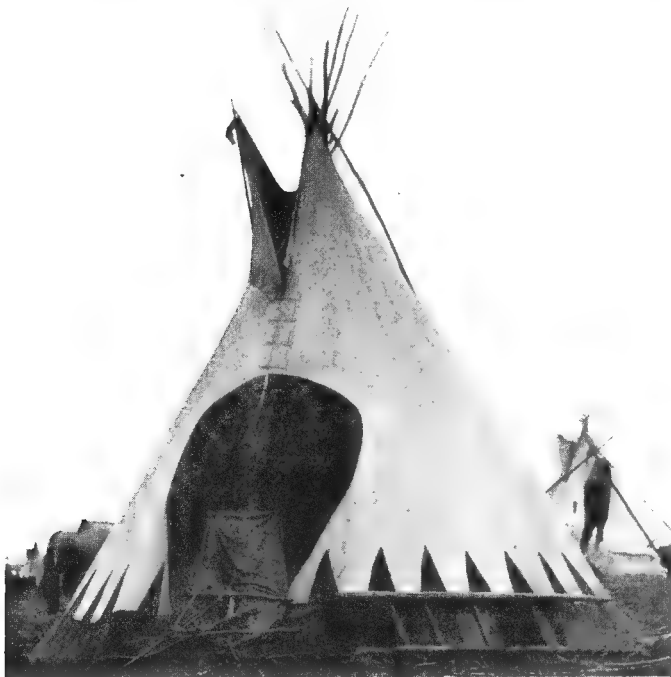


FIG. 8—Buffalo Rock tipi

tomed to rub themselves. Four horse-tails hung from the smoke-hole to represent the number of horses taken by the founder from an enemy camp.

The large Snake tipi of Medicine Owl (fig. 9) was beautifully pitched and had a fine appearance in the camp. Its cluster of poles were long and tapering, carefully worked and without a flaw. The cover fitted the framework of poles without a wrinkle.<sup>1</sup>

The top of this tipi was black for a cloudy sky at night, with constellations shining through—seven stars for the Great

<sup>1</sup> In order that it may be understood how a tipi was pinned up in front, it may be said that the women customarily boosted one another against the front-door poles in order to reach the highest pins, or they would use a travois to stand on. Before the days of horses, the skin lodges were smaller and no trouble was experienced in reaching the highest pins. Between the wings and the door, and also below the door, were from eight to fifteen holes in pairs for the wooden pins which held the cover together, the number varying according to the size of the tipi.



FIG. 9— Snake tipi of Medicine Owl (right) ; Star tipi (left)



Bear on the north wing and six for the Pleiades on the south. Two large serpents were around the center, the male on the south and the female on the north side, their heads meeting over the door and their tails extending to the rear. Above the snakes were four red bands for their trails, and their den was represented at the back. A cross at the top for the moth or sleep-bringer indicated that the tipi came to the founder in a dream. At the bottom was a red band with rounded hills for prairies and discs for puff-balls or fallen stars.

The sacred bundle, and the articles that went with its ritual, hung from a tripod at the back. These included a fringed rawhide case with buffalo-hoofs, buffalo-rocks (ammonites) which resemble miniature buffalo, and some rattles, together with a rawhide used for drumming in the ritual. It was tabu to break any bones inside the Snake tipi, lest the owner's horses become lame.

There was a Water Monster tipi, which had two serpent-like figures around the middle, with yellow and green plumes extending from their heads. On the back of the tipi were figures of a crescent moon and the morning star. For its ritual an altar was made with symbols of the moon, morning star, and mistake-morning-star, also two sun-dogs with marks for sunbeams. This strange horned serpent, together with the tipi and the supernatural power that went with it, were believed to have come down from the sun.

The Elk tipi had figures of a pair of elk, the male on the south side and the female on the north. Their vitals were shown together with the life-line, and the brain, kidneys, and heart. The top of the tipi was black for the night sky, with constellations, and under the top narrow bands in red and green represented the trails of elk. At the base was a broad band with mountain peaks, and discs for puff-balls symbolizing fallen stars.

The Mountain Sheep tipi (fig. 10) had a procession of rams going toward the door. At the bottom were figures depicting the mountain peaks the sheep inhabit, and under the black top were circles in red to represent the trails worn by them. Their vital organs were marked—the brain, and the life-line extending from the head to the kidneys.

The Deer tipi of Short Robe, who was head-man of the Brave Dog Society, had a pair of deer, the buck on the south and the doe on the north side. This tipi had the usual black top for the night sky, with constellations, and two red bands



FIG. 10—Mountain Sheep tipi

for deer trails. Under the figures of the deer, and close to the mountains they inhabit, were hoof-marks for deer-tracks.

During a heavy storm which broke over the camp, the cover of this Deer tipi was rent asunder. The wind was so strong that the men threw a lariat to windward, noosing it round the tops of the poles and fastening it to stakes driven into the ground to prevent the tipi from overturning, then lashing another rope around the center and crossing the ear-poles in front to protect the smoke-hole from the wind.

Later the damaged cover of the Deer tipi was replaced by a new one, as in figure 12, but the old cover was destroyed, as there could be no duplicate. It was sacrificed to the sun by spreading it upon the surface of a lake and sinking it beneath the water.

The Snow tipi (figs. 11, 13), or Winter tipi as it was also called, was especially interesting because of its symbolism and the legend of its origin. It came from Estoneapesta, Maker

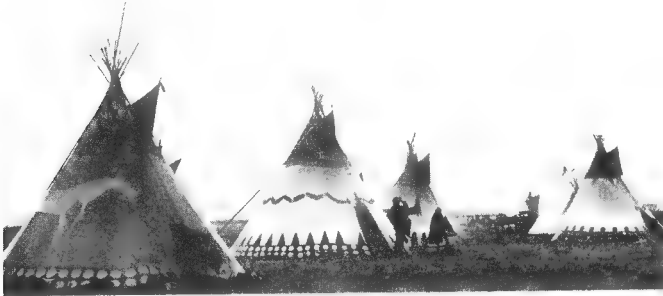


FIG. 11—Snow tipi (right) and inner circle-camp. (Horse-tipi, Snake tipi, and Snow tipi of Mad Wolf)

Of Storms And Blizzards, and was known as a "bad-weather lodge" because it was believed to influence the weather. This tipi was not often seen in the summer camps, when the people wanted good weather.

In case of bad weather, also at night, the sacred bundle was taken inside the tipi, otherwise it hung from a tripod in the rear. It contained articles used in the ritual—feathers which had protective power and were worn by the owner when he went to war, a mink-skin, wristlets of otter-skin, tobacco pouch, and a black stone pipe. The face and body



FIG. 12—Making a new cover for decorating an Eagle tipi  
The top painted black represents a night sky; the cross is the morning star; the seven discs symbolize the Great Bear.

of the owner were painted yellow for the sunlight; red marks on his face and cheeks represented the sun; there were also marks for sun-dogs, because they appear in winter on both sides of the sun and indicate cold and stormy weather.

The Snow tipi had a yellow top for the color of the sky at sunrise. A cluster of seven stars for the Great Bear was painted on the north wing, the direction blizzards come from; the Pleiades, or "Bunch Stars," were represented on the south wing. At the back of the tipi was a red disc for the sun, with a buffalo-tail attached. Under the yellow top, and at the four sides where stood the four main lodge-poles, were four claws to represent the thunderbird. At the bottom a yellow band depicted the earth, with green discs, the ice-color. On both sides of the door were horse-tails for good luck with horses. Fastened to the tops of the wing-poles were bunches of crow-feathers with small bells attached to



FIG. 13—Snow tipi of Chief Mad Wolf. (In this tipi the adoption ceremony for the author took place in 1898)

tinkle in the wind. Some of the tabus were: no drumming allowed inside; the fire must not die out, nor moccasins hung up; dogs must not be allowed inside, nor the tipi-cover raised. The door was a calf-skin with the fur on.

## LEGEND OF THE SNOW TIPI

"Maker Of Storms And Blizzards gave us the Snow tipi. It happened long ago in winter. A man named Sacred Otter and his young son were hunting buffalo on the open plains. They were at work on the carcass of a large bull, and had the hide partly off, when they saw black clouds coming toward them, spreading out and rolling over and over. It was a blizzard, and they had no time to get away; so they made a shelter with the hide and carcass of the buffalo bull and crawled inside. A deep drift formed quickly over them—and they were soon warm and comfortable, in spite of the severe cold and wind.

"Then Sacred Otter fell asleep and dreamed of a strange tipi. He walked round and round looking at its decorations, when he heard a voice say, 'Why don't you come inside instead of walking around that way?'



FIG. 14—White Grass sketching the pine-cone for the Pine Tree tipi of the author

"Sacred Otter lifted the door-flap and saw a fine-looking man seated at the back smoking a black stone pipe. His hair was white, and he wore a long white robe. Finally the stranger spoke, saying: 'I am Estoneapesta, Maker Of Cold Weather, and this is my Snow tipi. It is I who send the blizzards—the snow and cold from the north. And it was I who caught you in this blizzard; but for the sake of your small son who is with you, I am going to spare your life. I now give you the Snow tipi with its decorations, also this black stone pipe, and my supernatural power goes with it. When you get back to your camp, make a new lodge and paint its cover with pictures like those you see on mine.' The Cold Maker taught Sacred Otter the songs and prayers that went with the ritual, and said they should be used for healing the sick; and he gave him a charm to wear when he went to war, which had a protective power.

"Then Sacred Otter awoke. He looked outside the shelter and saw that the blizzard was abating. He remembered his dream and knew that Cold Maker was keeping his promise to spare their lives. When he returned to camp with his son, he made a model of the Snow tipi with its pictures and decorations, just as he saw it all in his dream. And when the spring came, the time when the Blackfoot make their new lodges, Sacred Otter made and painted the first Snow tipi. Since that time we have always believed in its wonderful power for healing the sick and protection for its occupants from sickness and danger."

The photograph of the Snow tipi (fig. 12) of Chief Mad Wolf, my foster-father, was taken in one of his summer camps at the time of my adoption in 1898. In the summer of 1935, when I returned to the home of Mad Wolf in the valley of Cutbank River, his family still had the sacred bundle of the Snow tipi in their possession, also the Beaver bundle of which he was the guardian.

In one of the circle-camps I had a tipi without decoration. Up to that time I had been unable to find out about painted tipis, their rituals and the meaning of their decoration. No one talked about them, and the people knew nothing, except that the "power" of such tipis was weakened if their owners revealed their secrets.

One day I decided that it might add to the appearance and prestige of my tipi in the camp, were I to have animal pictures painted on the cover, like those of the prominent families. I

looked them over and decided that otters would be the best. It was then I began to learn about painted tipis.



FIG. 15—Pine Tree tipi of the author

First I consulted Medicine Weasel, and a friend and neighbor of Chief Mad Wolf, my foster-father. Medicine Weasel had a reputation as an artist and painter of tipis, and was willing to do the decorating; but when I designated the otter design, like a certain tipi in the camp, he changed his mind, making all manner of excuses. When I urged him, he ex-



plained he had no right to use the otter design—it might even cause his death.

Then I went to White Grass, the medicine-man, also an associate of Mad Wolf. White Grass was known as a Beaver-man, who helped in the Beaver ceremony; he had good standing in the tribe, because of his knowledge of sacred bundles and rituals, and he was more resourceful than Medicine Weasel. He informed me that he would not copy the otter design, as he had no right to do so, but asked if the pine-tree decoration would not do me just as well, for, he explained, he had the right to use this design, because he had dreamed it himself while sleeping under a pine-tree in the mountains.

So White Grass went to work on my tipi, first sketching the design on the cover by means of a white liquid scraped from a hide (fig. 14), using willow sticks for ruling the lines and a piece of rawhide rope for drawing the circles. He painted a yellow pine-cone as the symbol of the pine-tree, using cancellous parts of buffalo-bone for pencils, because they held the paint. A different pencil was used for each color and the pigment was rubbed into the texture in order that it could not be brushed off. White Grass had a clam-shell for mixing the colors with water and fat, and kept his different dry colors in little deerskin bags. These consisted of a red earth, also a red from burned yellow earth, a white earth, yellow from a place on the Yellowstone river and another yellow from buffalo gall-stones, black from charred wood, blue from a dark-blue mud, and green from a lake scum.

At the base of my tipi White Grass painted a wide red band, with white discs for fallen stars and triangular figures for mountains (fig. 15). A broad sharp pine-cone was painted at the back, with slender lines in yellow projecting upward from its sides. The two tipi-wings at the top were black for the night sky, with a blue cross for the morning star at the back and discs on the wings for constellations—the Great Bear (*Ichkitkamiks*, "the Seven") on the north side, and the Pleiades (*Myochpokoiiks*, "bunch stars") on the south.

In addition to the Pine Tree tipi, I had a small traveling lodge, the cover of which was light and easy to handle for packing on horses (fig. 16). It was given to me by my friends Big Eyes and his wife, because I was kind to their children. The wife was skilled in the making of tipis and was known also as a good decorator. She painted pictures of both war and hunting on the tipi-cover illustrating adventures in the life of her husband; figures of men and animals and Indian

camps, in red, yellow, and blue; pictures of fights with hostile Indians, marking the camps and places where they took place.

Mountain peaks were represented on both sides of the door, and at the base a broad yellow band with discs for fallen



FIG. 16—Traveling tipi of the author

stars. A yellow top for the sky color at sunrise, with a cross for the morning star at the back, and constellations on both wings—the Pleiades and Great Bear. Bands in red and yellow represented a rainbow, the symbol of a clearing storm.

About the center were the war and hunting pictures—memorable events in the career of Big Eyes (fig. 17). The brave deeds of my friend were here recorded and accredited,



FIG. 17—Traveling tipi of the author, with some of its pictographs of war and hunting

such as the taking of weapons from enemies and the capture of horses from their camps at night.

Just under the yellow top was pictured a night attack on Big Eyes' camp at the foot of the Rockies by a band of hostile Sioux, and his hand-to-hand fight with their chief; also other fights with Cree and Crow Indians; and an attack on a white settlement was represented by a man in modern clothes with a milk bucket and a cow.

The most notable hunting adventure was Big Eyes' fight with a band of five grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains—a large she-grizzly with two cubs and two other grizzlies. In

one of the scenes he was shown plunging his knife into the heart of the mother bear, and in another she was tearing him with teeth and claws, then left him for dead to attack his horse.

The recording of brave deeds in war was chiefly in picture-writing, generally upon robes, the inner and outer walls of tipis, and sometimes on war-shirts and leggings. But the conventional place, and the place where they attracted the most attention in the camp, was upon the cover of a tipi.

In the circle-camp of 1908 the large War tipi of Running Rabbit was a good example of heraldry and picture-writing. He was a famous warrior of the old generation, still alive and prominent when I first came to the Blackfoot camp in 1896; but he died a few years later. I remember Running Rabbit as a venerable, kindly chief, with a fine face and snow-white hair. In the camp of 1908, some years after his death, the records of his brave deeds in war were still heralded at ceremonial functions and were regarded as a social asset to his family and relatives. His War tipi, with its sacred bundle and its ritual composed of war-songs, was in reality one of the painted tipis.

In the pictographs on the cover of this tipi, two functions of the war-path had distinct symbols, those of the leader and the scout. The symbol for leader was given once for each war-party led and was represented by three sides of a square. The honor of having been detailed as scout was marked by lines representing the course taken by a scout with reference to the main body. A curve represented the war-party waiting, and a zigzag line the course always taken by a scout to conceal the warriors' true position. The taking of horses from an enemy camp at night was considered an act of great daring, and was represented by crossed lines, or by a picket-pin and the short end of a rope.

A pictograph at the left of the door represented a war-party intrenched—a circle indicating a pit where four warriors, marked by four arrowheads, successfully stood off a greater number of the enemy. Also recorded were many other fights against hostile tribes, successful scouting expeditions, wrestling with an enemy to take his weapon, horse-stealing expeditions, saving the lives of two companions by leading their horse to a place of safety. The stealing of a mule from the United States Army was regarded as an act of especial bravery, because the mule was then a rare animal.

Another War tipi in the 1908 camp (fig. 18) recorded on its cover the raids and successful war expeditions of its founder and his associates. At the back, the figure of a man with a pipe symbolized the founder's dream in which the tipi originated. The crooked lines on both sides of him indicated rivers where certain important events took place. The forks in the

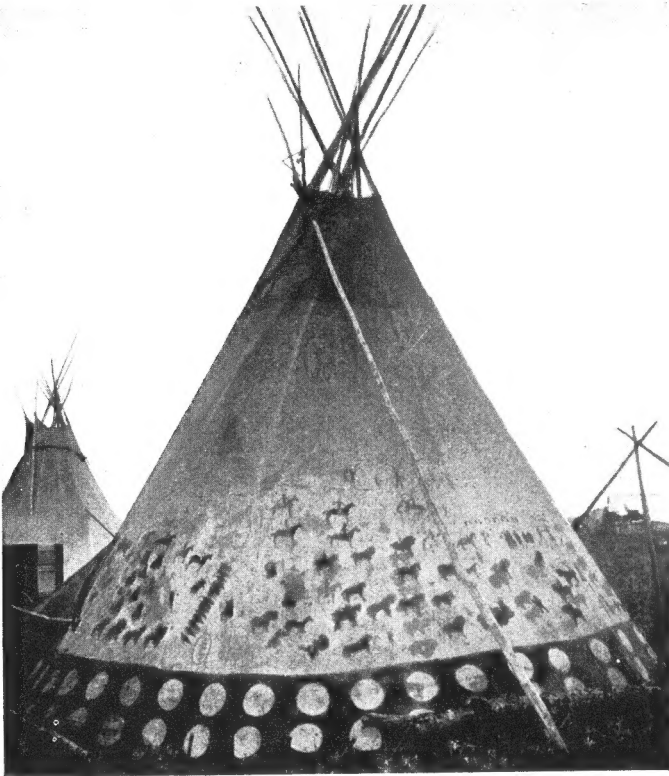


FIG. 18—Pictographs on the north side of a War tipi

river on his right were easily recognized by those who had knowledge of the country. Figures of men, and horses and other animals, marked successful fights, raids, and hunting expeditions. The sacred bundle, fastened to a pole on the outside, had a ritual and war-songs that went with it.

Records of important events were kept on buffalo-skins and

were known as "winter-counts." Handed down by prominent men from father to son, these recorded tribal camps, battles and names of their leaders, the death of great chiefs, the years of sickness, hard winters, summers of drought, when wild game was scarce and snows deep. Some of the important events which were recorded in Blackfoot winter-counts were:

The great sickness (smallpox, 1836).

The time when eight tribes assembled in a big camp on the Yellowstone River, when Little Dog (Imitaikoan) was their head-chief (1855).

The coming of the Northwest Mounted Police (1874).

The cold winter when their horses were frozen (1876).

The winter when many people had the cough sickness.

The winter when the moose came into camp.

The winter they ate dogs to keep from starving.

The first treaty with white men.

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